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NARRATIVE & REPORT

OF THE

Causes and Circumstances

OF THE

Deplorable Conflagration

AT

RICHMOND, (Va.)

[VIRGINIA.]

FROM LETTERS

AND

AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS.

PRINTED FOR THE PUBLIC

January 12th, 1812.

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NARRATIVE.

DREADFUL CALAMITY.

FIRE IN RICHMOND.

*Extract of a Letter to the Editors of the
Mercantile Advertiser, dated Richmond,
December 27, 1811.*

"I hasten to give you an unofficial account of a most dreadful calamity in this place last evening, which happened by the destruction of the Theatre by fire, at about 11 o'clock. A new play, which had never been acted in this country, together with a very pleasant evening, drew forth a multitude of people, and the house was remarkably crowded. The curtain had risen in the last act, when part of the paper scenery accidentally caught fire from a candle, and communicated instantly to the other part and to the roof of the building; and in less than two minutes, the whole was in flame. All was confusion. The stair-ways were thronged; many trampled to death under foot; others threw themselves out of the windows, and were dashed to piec-

es on the ground, some of whom were killed outright, some with legs and arms broken, while others escaped unhurt. Many were burnt to death in the boxes, and others on the stair-ways. Some of the most respectable citizens of Richmond, and indeed of the State of Virginia have perished—among them are Gov. Smith, elected but a few days past; Mr. Venable, President of the Virginia Bank; Mr. Wm. Brown, one of the most respectable merchants of Richmond; a son of Major Gibbon, who was a very promising young officer in the army of the U. S.; Mrs. Gallagher; Mr. Mayo; together with several of the most respectable women in the place, both young and heads of families. Several husbands and wives perished together: among them a Mr. Batts and wife. He was a very eminent lawyer. It is impossible to ascertain the number of persons slain from 1861 to 1865. We can probably know, by to-morrow. They are digging them out of the ruins. They are to bury to a church, first burnt out of the taken out by the rebels, and that was

Gov. Smith.—The scene was awful beyond description. Imagine to yourself a tender mother with her little son in her arms, at the window of the third story, which she threw out, and he was caught unhurt; but she could not be prevailed upon to follow him, and perished in the flames, in sight of thousands, together with several others, that perished in the same way.

"Since writing the foregoing, they have ascertained that 68 persons have perished, and it is expected many more."

Extract of a letter from a gentleman to his father in New York, dated Richmond, December 27, 1861.

HONOURED FATHER,

"Through the mercy of an all wise Providence, I again have the privilege of addressing thee; and informing that although the most awful carnage that ever eye witnessed or ear heard has just befallen this city, yet that thy children are safe and secure from it.

"Last night about 11 o'clock the City-House of this city was burnt

the ground in half an hour; 'tis said, by a lamp catching to the upper scenery of the stage, and the flames spreading like lightning. Upwards of 600 people were in the house at the time—70 or 80 of which are already ascertained to be burnt to death, or killed in endeavouring to escape out of the house, and we fear many more are buried in the ruins. Oh! dear father, it was a dreadful sight, that never can be erased from my memory. The cries of the dying mother, the screams of the frantic daughter, the phrenzy of the expiring son, and distraction of the Richard, were more than enough to draw forth sympathy from an adamant heart. Many burnt and wounded are now languishing between life and death.

Extract of another letter, same date.

"It is painful for me to give a brief account of one of the most affecting events that ever occurred in any country. About a quarter past eleven last night, the Theatre (which was crowded) caught fire, by which 150 persons of

all description have lost their lives—Some indeed go so far as 500; and including the injured, the latter may not be far out of the way.—So suddenly was the house enveloped in the flames that two thirds of the supposed number perished in them. The female part of the audience suffered most. A great number of children have perished. Looking out of my window, I see Mrs. Patterson a corpse, and Mrs. Hetchel, with her thigh broke, supported over the bridge. A. B. Venable and W. Brown are gone and an immense number with broken bones—I fear Gibbon also gone.

Mr. R. has a leg broke, as also has Mr. Page, occasioned by jumping from the windows, and being trodden under foot. Nearly all in the upper galleries perished. An hour or two ago between 60 and 80 skeletons had been dug out of the ruins.

Such scenes are never seen before. I shudder when I think of it. Many have escaped after having lost their legs and part of their clothes burnt. Mr. Till of your city, near the

ly escaped; one side of his face a good deal burnt.

It is said the fire was occasioned by a lamp or candle having been hoisted with the scenery and was not discovered until it had made so much progress that the fire was falling on the stage; two minutes after which the roof fell in, and by suffocation caused a greater number of deaths than otherwise would have been.

A meeting at the capitol has been held; the bones not recognized will be put together, and a monument by subscription placed over them.—A day of fasting and prayer recommended on Wednesday.

Not a member of the Assembly, I am told has suffered. Long, long will the citizens of Richmond bewail this night.

FROM THE RICHMOND ENQUIRER.

Overwhelming Calamity.—In the whole course of our existence, we have never taken our pen under a deeper gloom than we feel at this moment. It falls to our lot to record one of the most

disastrous scenes which can happen in the whole circle of human affairs.—The reader must excuse the incoherence of the narrative: there is scarce a dry eye in this distracted city. Weep, my fellow citizens; for we have seen a night of woe, which scarce any eye had seen, or ear hath heard, and no tongue can adequately tell.

How can we describe the scene? No pen can paint it: no imagination can conceive it.—A whole theatre wrapt in flames—a gay and animated assembly suddenly thrown on the very verge of the grave—many of them, oh! how many, precipitated in a moment into eternity—youth and beauty, and old age and genius overwhelmed in one promiscuous ruin.—Shrieks, groans and human agony in every shape—this is the heartrending scene that we are called upon to describe. We sink under the effort. Reader! excuse our feelings, for they are the feelings of a whole city.

Let us collect our ideas as well as we can. On Thursday night a new play was given after piece was played.

the benefit of Mr. Placide. Crowds swarmed to the theatre—it was the fullest house this season—there were not less than 600 present. The play went on—the pantomime began—the first Act was over. The whole scene was before us—and all around us was mirth and festivity. Oh God! what a horrible revolution did one minute produce! The curtain rose on the 2d Act of the Pantomime—the orchestra was in full chorus: and Mr. West came on to open the scene—when sparks of fire began to fall on the back of the stage, and Mr. Robertson came out in unutterable distress, waved his hand to the ceiling, and uttered these appalling words—“The house is on fire.” His hand was immediately stretched forth to the persons in the stage box to help them on the stage—and aid their retreat in that direction. This is all we caught of the stage—the cry of *fire*, passed with electric velocity thro’ the house—every one flew from their seats to gain the lobbies and stairs.

The first bullet description. The most heart-piercing cry pervaded the

house. “Save me, save me.” Wives seeking for their husbands, females and children shrieking while the gathering element came rolling on its curling flames and columns of smoke; threatening to devour every human being in the building. Many were trodden under foot—several were thrown back from the windows which they were struggling to leap. The stair ways were immediately blocked up—the throng was so great that many were raised several feet over the heads of the rest—the smoke threatened an instant suffocation. We cannot dwell on this picture. We saw—we felt it—like others, we gave up ourselves for lost—we cannot depict it. Many leaped from the windows of the first story, and were saved—children and females and men of all descriptions were seen to precipitate themselves on the ground below—most were escaped; though several with broken legs, and thighs, and hideous contusions. Most if not all who were in he perished. Mr. Taylor, the last of the musicians who quitted the orchestra finding his retreat by the

back way cut off, leapt into the pit whence he entered the semicircular avenue which leads to the door of the Theatre, and found it nearly empty. He was the last that escaped from the pit ! how melancholy, that many who were in the boxes did not also jump into the pit and fly in the same direction. But those who were in the boxes, above and below, pushed for the lobby—many, as has been said, escaped through the windows—but the most of them had no other resource than to descend the stairs, many escaped in that way—but so great was the pressure that they retarded each other : while the devouring element approached to sweep them into eternity. Several who even emerged from the building were so much scorched that they have since perished—some even jumped from the second window—some others have been dreadfully burnt.

The fire flew with a rapidity, almost beyond example. Within ten minutes after it caught the whole house was wrapped in flames. The colored people in the gallery most of them escaped

through the stairs cut off from the rest of the house—some have no doubt fallen victims. The pit and boxes had but one common avenue—through which the whole crowd escaped, save those only who leaped through the windows.

But the scene which ensued—it is impossible to paint. Women with dishevelled hair : fathers and mothers thricking out for children, husbands for their wives brothers for their sisters, filled the whole area on the outside of this building. A few, who escaped, plunged again into the flames to save some dear object of their regard—and they perished. The Governor perhaps shared this melancholy fate. Others were frantic, and would have rushed to destruction, but for the hand of a friend. The bells tolled. Almost the whole town rushed to the fatal spot.

The flames must have been caught the evening before last. That Lohman—Robertson saw it, when it was no larger than a spark—Young saw it on the roof when it first burst through. Every article of the theatre was consumed, as well as the dwelling house next

to it. But what is wealth in comparison of the valuable lives which have gone forever?—The whole town is shrouded in woe. Heads of families extinguished forever—many and many is the house, in which a chaim has been made that can never be filled up. We cannot dwell on this picture, but look at the following catalogue of the victims, and then conceive the calamity which has fallen upon us—we must drop the pen—when we have time to collect a more particular account, we shall give it hereafter. Oh miserable night of unutterable woe!!

AN ORDINANCE

Concerning the Conflagration of the Theatre, in city of Richmond.

PASSED AT 11 O'CLOCK, Dec. 27th, 1811.)

Whereas, the fire which took place in the Theatre, on the 25th inst. brought upon our City a calamity unknown in the annals of our Country, from a similar cause, depriving society of many of its most esteemed and valuable members, and inflicting upon the survivors, the most poignant and afflicting; and the Common Hall, participating of those feelings, and being desirous of manifesting

their respect for the remains which have been preserved from the contagration, and soothe and allay as much as in them lies, the grief of the friends and relations of the deceased:

Be it therefore ordained by the president and Common Council of the City of Richmond, in Common Hall assembled—and it is hereby ordained by the authority of the same, that doctor Adams, Mr. William Hay, Mr. Raisten, and M. Gamble, be and they are hereby authorized and empowered to cause to be collected and deposited in such urns, coffins or other suitable inclosures, as they may approve, all the remains of persons, who have have suffered, which shall not be claimed by the relatives, and cause the same to be removed to the public burying ground, with all proper respect and solemnity, giving to the citizens of Richmond and Town of Manchester, notice of the time of such interment and providing the necessary refreshments; and they shall have further authority to cause to be erected over such remains, such tomb or tombs, as they may approve, with such inscriptions as, to them may appear best calculated to record the melancholy and afflicting event.

And be it further ordained by the authority of the same, that the Constable of this City, be authorised to communicate to the citizens, that it is earnestly recommended that they will abstain from all business, keeping

their shops, stores, counting houses and offices shut for forty eight hours, from the passing of this ordinance.

And be it further ordained that no person or persons shall be permitted for and during the term of four months from the passage hereof to exhibit any public show or spectacle, or open any public dancing Assembly within this City under the penalty of six dollar, and sixty six cents for every hour the same shall be exhibited.

The Commissioners appointed by this ordinance, shall have authority to draw upon the Chamberlain for the amount of any expenses by them incurred in executing the same.

Copy, N. SHEPPARD, C. C. H.

At a very numerous Meeting of the citizens of Richmond, Manchester and others, convened at the Capitol on Friday, the 27th inst. The mayor of this City in the Chair. The following Preamble, and Resolutions were moved and unanimously adopted:

This City having been visited by a calamity the most distressing with which society can be afflicted, which has deprived us of many of our most valuable citizens, pervaded every family and rendered our whole town one deep and gloomy scene of woe; the extent of which at this time cannot be accurately ascertained.

Resolved therefore, that three proper persons in each ward be appointed to go round, and procure the most accurate information of the names and numbers of such of our citizens and others who have fallen a sacrifice by the burning of the Theatre last evening; and that some persons in Manchester be requested to perform the same service in that town; and that they make report thereof to the mayor.

And the following persons were appointed, viz. in Jefferson ward, William Rowlett, Joseph A Myers, and Samuel Pleasants; in Madison ward, Jedediah Allen, Robert McKim and Robert Pollard; in Monroe ward, Thomas Taylor, Anderson Barter, and Thomas Rutherford; and in Manchester, William Fenwick, Mr. Clark, and Mr. A. Freeland.

Resolved—That it be recommended to the citizens of Richmond to observe Wednesday next, as a day of humiliation and prayer, in consequence of the late melancholy event, and to suspend on that day their usual occupations.

Resolved—That the committee appointed by the Common Hall, to collect the remains of the deceased, be also requested to regulate the time and order of the funeral procession.

Resolved—That the members of the legislature, the executive and all the judiciary branches be respectfully requested to attend on this melancholy occasion.

Resolved—That the Rev. Mr. John Buchanan and Mr. John Blair, be requested to prepare a funeral sermon for the occasion to be delivered by one of them on Wednesday next in the church on Richmond Hill.

Resolved—That the citizens of Richmond be requested to wear crape for one month, in token of the deep sense universally entertained of this severe visitation.

Resolved—That the inhabitants of this city and town of Manchester, be respectfully requested, and such strangers as may wish to join in this melancholy occasion, be most cheerfully permitted to contribute towards the monument to be erected over the deceased, in aid of the public funds to be contributed by this corporation.

Resolved—That a committee consisting of the following gentlemen, viz. General John Marshall, Thomas Taylor, Joseph Marx, William Fenwick, and Benjamin Hatcher, be appointed to receive contributions and to make such arrangements in concert with a committee from the Common Hall as may be necessary for erecting the monument designated by an Ordinance passed this day.

Resolved—That although this meeting have no reasons whatever to believe that this melancholy catastrophe has been produced by design, a committee consisting of Thomas Smith, William Marshall, and Samuel C. Adams, be appointed to inquire into its cause,

or, for the purpose of submitting this statement for the information of the world.

BENJAMIN LATE, Mayor,

THE Committee appointed by the meeting of the citizens of Richmond this day to ascertain the number of the unfortunate persons who perished by the burning of the theatre on Thursday evening last, have, according to order, proceeded in the discharge of that melancholy duty, and lament exceedingly that they have discovered the loss greatly to exceed the number which was at first apprehended—and beg leave to submit the following list of those who are dead and missing as the most accurate which they have been enabled to discover.

A LIST OF DEAD AND MISSING.

JEFFERSON WARD.

George W. Smith, governor,	Adeline Bauman, daughter of Mrs. Bauman,
John Thomas, son of John Thomas, daughters of Mr. Thomas,	Ann Craig, daughter of Mrs. Adam Craig,
Joseph James, son of John James,	— Norval, a carpenter,
John Smith, son of John Smith,	Prudence, daughter of Mr. Wm. Rose,
Mercedal Marks,	Nancy Patterson, woman of color, supposed to have perished.
Charlotte Marshall, daughter of John Marshall,	

MADISON WARD.

Abraham R. Venable, presi-
dent of the bank,
William Southgate, son of
Wright,
Benjamin Borts and wife,
Arianna Hunter,
Mary Whitlock,
Juliana Harvey,
Mrs. Heron,
Mrs. Girardin and Child,
Mrs. Robert Greenhow,
Mrs. Moss,
Barack Judah's child,
Mrs. Leslie,
Edward Warton, a youth,
George Dixon, a youth,
Wm. Brown,
Mrs. Paterson,
John Welch, stranger, nap-
how to sir A. Pigott, late
from England,—
Philadelphia,—missing

Margaret Copland,
Margaret Anderson
Emily Galloway,
Mary Clay,
Lucy Gawnthney,
Louisa Mayo,
Mrs. Gerard,
Mrs. Gibson,
Miss Green,
Mary Davis,
Thomas Frazier, a youth,
Jane Wade, a young wo-
man.
Mrs. Wm. Cook & daugh-
ter,
Elizabeth Stephenson,
Mrs. Convern and child,
Ponsey Griffin,
Fanny Goff, a woman of
colour,
Beney Johnson, a woman
of colour, free.

MONROE WARD.

Mrs. Taylor Braxton,
Mrs. Elizabeth Page,
Mrs. Jerrod,
James Walden,
Miss Eliza Ann N. Kane,
Mrs. Gallego,
Miss Convers,
Lieutenant James Gibbon,
Mrs. Thomas Wilson,
Mrs. Maria Nelson,
Miss Mary Page,
Mrs. Laforest,

⌘ Besides these, we must add the name
of Mr. Abnerline, marshal of Wythe county.

⌘ The House of Delegates met yester-
day, only to adjourn till Monday.

At a meeting of the commissioners appoin-
ted by the common Hall to superintend the

interment of the remains of their friends and
fellow citizens who unfortunately lost their
lives in the conflagration of the theatre, the
following resolutions were adopted.

1st. That the citizens of Richmond and
Manchester, and the citizens at present resid-
ing in either of those places, be requested to
assemble to-morrow the 28th instant, at one
o'clock, P. M. at the Baptist Meeting house,
for the purpose of attending the funeral.

2. That the following be the order of Pro-
cession.

Corpse.
Clergy.
Mourners and ladies.
Executive council.
Directors of the bank.
Judiciary.
Members of the legislature.
Court of hustings.
Common hall
Citizens on foot.
Citizens on horseback.

JOHN ADAMS,
GAB. RALSTON,
W. H. HAY, Jun.
JOHN G. GAMBLE.

December 27, 1811.

The editor of the Inquirer is requested to
state, that the members of the legislature have
all escaped the late conflagration of the
theatre.
MANY MEMBERS.

FURTHER NARRATIVE.

We cannot paint the details of the scene on Thursday night. No description can do justice to its horrors—and there were so few persons so cool and self-collected as to accurately paint any part of the mass of woes which fell in a moment upon us. Some scenes are so fraught with horror, that a delicate pencil would have to skip them. Besides, time enough has not been had to bring together an accurate group of woes.

It is painful to touch upon the catastrophe of those who are gone forever.—Their ashes are in the grave—but their memories are entombed in our hearts.

The generous and worthy Smith, who but a few days since was crowned with one of the highest honours which Virginia can bestow, is snatched from his country, his distracted family, his children and his friends! It is not certainly known whether he had effected his escape from the building and rushed again into the flames to save his child! There is a confusion in the story, and perhaps it is as well if it never were cleared up.

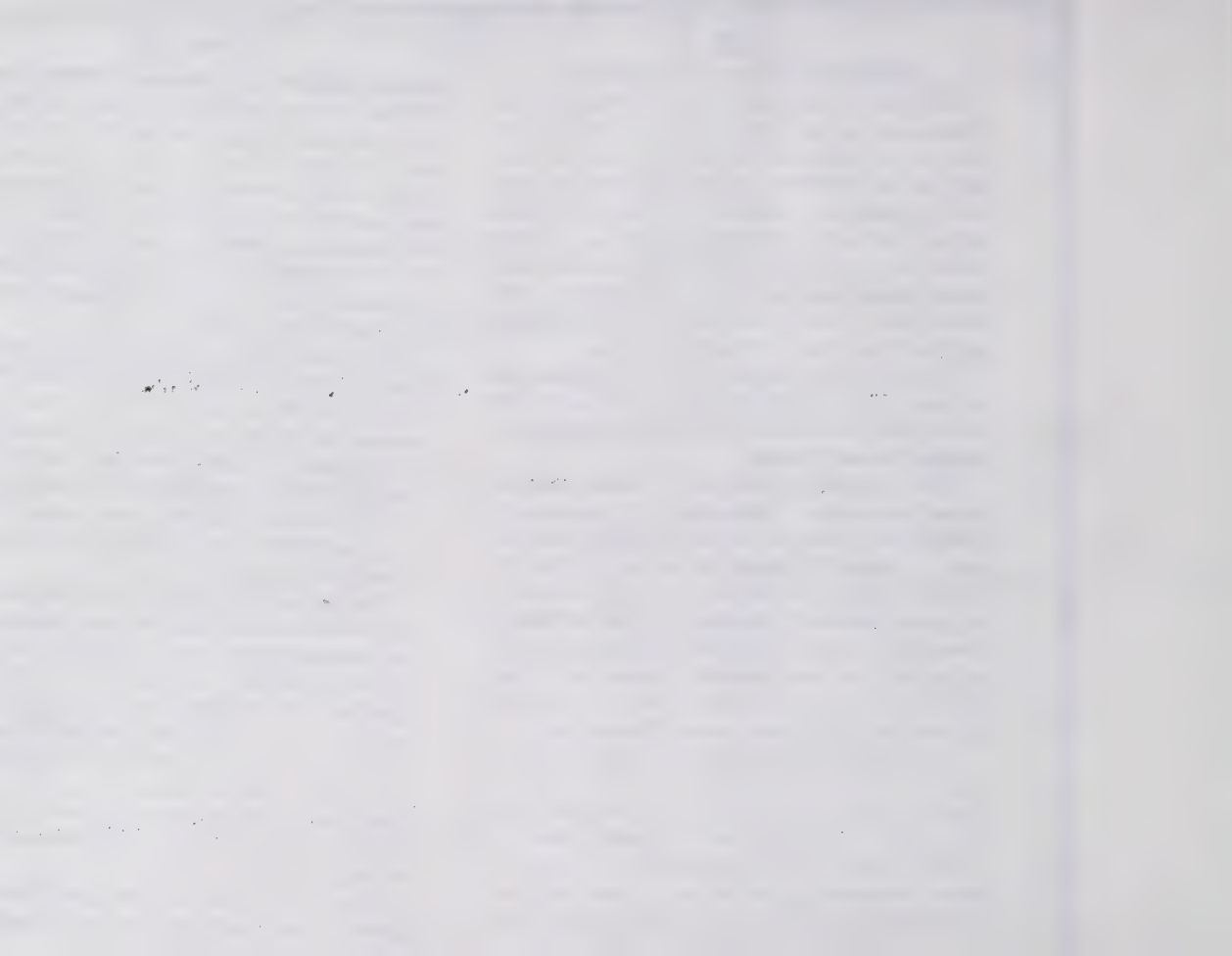
Abraham B. Venable, the president of the bank of Virginia; a man who has filled our public stations with very high repute; who has been in the house of representatives and in the senate of the United States, during the most interesting periods—he too is gone! He has left no wife or children; but a long

train of relatives and friends to weep his loss. He was in the box with ladies; he begged them not to be inquisitive or impatient; but was at length driven towards a window in the lobby, with a crowd of others. The suffocating smoke came rolling on. Mr. V. and some who were with him, were thrown down. Mr. Noland fell towards the window and was saved; Mr. V. fell the other way and perished in the smoke.

Many doubtless perished in the same way. The volume of smoke, which could not at first escape through the roof, was bent downwards; black, dense, almost saturated with oily vapours. Many were suffocated by it, who might have had strength enough to leap the windows.—Several were saved by the fresh air which they inhaled at the windows or even at a crevice.

Poor Bous! a man of astonishing assiduity and attainments at the bar, has perished with his wife and her niece—he fell perhaps a victim to his hopes. He thought it more prudent to sit still with his wife, while the crowd passed by; but her sister-in-law, Mrs. Page, yielding to the sympathetic impulse of her fears, ran to rescue him. When a seal has death set upon his family! At one fell swoop, five helpless children are converted into orphans.

How heavily has the hand of death fallen upon the family of the Harvies! Poor mourn-



ers deeply indeed have ye drunk of the cup of affliction:—Within 5 short years ye had numbered among the dead, the venerable John Harvie, the distinguished Lewis Harvie, the amiable Mrs. McCraw, the interesting little boy of Dr. Brokenbrough, —Bar by one blow, the distressed mother, Mrs. Harvie, lost her noble and high-souled daughter Juliana, her excellent son E. J. Harvie, and that sweet little girl Mary Whitlock, her beloved grand daughter!!!—Reader, conceive what you never can have felt.

Lieut. James Gibson, of the United States navy, has gone with the rest! Young as he was, he had tasted of the cup of affliction. He was taken captive in the Philadelphia, and interned in the prisons of Tripoli. On this fatal night, he and Mr. John Lynch were in the same box with Mrs. Gallego, Miss Conyers, Mr. Venable and others—when the alarm was first given, they endeavoured to quiet the apprehensions of the ladies, but when the fire scenes was in flames, they reached over for Miss Conyers, who had made meritorious below—they took her on their arms and her lower limbs, in a moment she was safely, her head lying over Mr. Lynch's left arm. In this manner they proceeded towards the head of the stairs, when Gibson said to Lynch, leave S. by to me. I am strong enough to carry her; she is light and you can give some help etc." Mr. L. re-

plied, "God bless you, Gibson, there is the stair," and then turned round to seek for some of the other ladies. Poor Gibson and his lovely and interesting companion, sank together.

We must drop this recital. We have already stated the deaths of Mrs. Gerardin and her sweet boy—of Mrs. Gibson, whose husband is perhaps now on his way from Europe; what a blow upon his heart; of the venerable Mrs. Page; of Mrs. Lesslie; of the lovely Nancy Green, the daughter of Mr. Green, the manager—of the amiable Mrs. Robert Greenhow. The particulars of most of their fates are wrapt in oblivion. Their ashes are in the grave.

These perished amid the flames—but Mrs. Patterson and Mr. William Brown, was overwhelmed by the crowd.

Let us change the scene. It is a far more grateful task to describe the fate of those who have, as it were miraculously escaped. It is some relief to our feelings, to contemplate those who seem again to have "revisited the regions of life." It is almost as if the grave had opened them up and set them free. We are aware, indeed, that our limits do not permit us to give any but hasty sketches and sketches of events.

Mr. J. G. Jackson was overcome by the suffocating smoke and fell senseless.—His last recollection was that his feet were dar-

ascending; but whether the floor or stairway were broken or he had reached the descent, he was not conscious—but insensible he descended to the level of the pit where a strong current of fresh air revived him; as he lay amongst a heap of prostrate persons. He struggled to rise and found himself on his feet with a lady clinging to him and beseeching him to save her.—With difficulty he found the door, not long acquainted with the house, but at least emerged with the lady, when the fire was pouring through the front windows, and ere they had advanced far, the roof tumbled in.

Mr. M. W. Hancock carried with him to the play, his niece, the two Miss Herons, and three boys. When the alarm was given, he did all in his power to save his *protégées*—but was at last separated from them all. The flames were approaching with a degree of velocity never before equalled or perhaps never exceeded. Hitherto the scene had been all bustle, confusion, and consternation; it now changed to one of awful fear and desperation that beggars all description. He attempted to reach the lower window in the lobby of the lower boxes. He at last succeeded in mounting on the heads of the crowd betwixt him and the window, and finally reached it, surrounded by the unavailing and afflicting cries of those suffocating around him. He stepped within the window,

and with difficulty raised the lower sash—he thrust his feet out, when the sash was suddenly pressed down and caught his feet betwixt it and the sill. He extricated one foot, but could not get the other, until those behind him who had sufficient strength left to mount over him and the lower sash which kept him down, and did so. He found himself so far gone from suffocation that he gave himself up as lost—the flames, however rushed over his head, and the introduction of fresh air at the bottom of the window gave him new life. Those behind him being no longer able to keep him down; with a last effort raised the sash, extricated his foot, and jumped out. It gives us sincere pleasure to add that the boys and girls whom he carried with him have all escaped with their lives.

Mr. John Lynch was the only person who passed the window after Mr. Hancock. After he had left poor Gibbon he met via a variety of horrid adventures. And was in utter darkness in the lobby, and suffocation threatened. It was an awful crisis—and but that one of the windows were burst open and let in fresh air, he thinks all in the lobby must have perished. At length he reached the window, where he found a gentleman fixed fast, whom he since believed to have been Mr. Hancock. After an awful lapse the flames were rushing on in all directions, his hair caught fire, hope desert-

ted him; he was struck with horror at the idea of being burnt alive. He rushed towards the window, waving his hands as quick as possible over his head and clothes. This was a dreadful moment, he saw many drop down on each side of him suffocated—the window was now free, and he was scarcely on the bottom of it when he heard an awful crush behind him. He threw himself out, and Providence preserved him.

Mr. Robert Greenhow precipitated himself down the stairs; over firebrands and bodies, with his fine son in his arms—and was saved.

Mr. Head Lynch made a wonderful escape with his child. His lady was saved by a very strong man's pulling her by the hair of the head over the balcony in the stair way.

Mr. Stetson fell in the lobby with his head to the wall—but for a crack, which his mouth accidentally caught, he would have died for want of air—the fresh air that streamed through it revived him, enough to lift his head to the window—a fresh draught of it revived him, and he jumped out.

Mr. Gordon was saved in a state of insensibility. His lady was saved by jumping through a window and clinging to a man, and her little daughter by hanging to her mantle. They had three children there, and not one of them was lost.

Several individuals were active in rescu-

ing the lives of their fellow creatures. Dr. McCaw let down several from the window—Mr. D. and Mr. Grant and others, who were out, received many as they were let or jumped down.

REPORT

Of the Committee of investigation.

We the Committee appointed by our fellow Citizens, "to enquire into the causes of melancholy catastrophe" which took place in this city on Thursday night last; a catastrophe, which has spread a gloom over a whole city, and filled every eye with tears; have given to this melancholy duty all the attention of our power. We feel it due to ourselves; it is due to our weeping fellow citizens; it was due to the world to collect all the lights which might serve to elucidate an event whose effects are so deeply written on our hearts. We have seen every person who was behind the scenes, that was best able to resist our enquiries—we have heard their statement, and after sifting them as accurately as possible, beg leave to submit the following report to our afflicted citizens.

On the 11th of the month last, the Pastormine of "the bleeding sin, or, Agnes and Raymond," came on for representation after the play was over. In the first act, amongst other scenes, was the scene of the College of Baynet the Robber, which was illustrated

by a chandelier apparently hanging from the ceiling. When the curtain fell on the first act and before it rose on the second, this chandelier was lifted from its position among the scenery above. It was fixed with wicks to it; one only of them had been lit, yet when it was lifted above, *this fatal lamp was not extinguished.* Here is the first link in the chain of our disasters! the man who raised it, does not pretend to deny it—but pleads that he did so in consequence of an order from some person, whom he supposed authorised to direct him. That person was behind him; the voice had reached him, without his seeing the person, and he does not pretend positively to recognise him. We have not the most distant hint that there was the slightest malicious intention in the order or in the act; it was intention: it was the grossest negligence. The litter of the lamp says that he was aware of the danger, and remonstrated; that the act; yet yielded with too facile docility to the reiterated orders of a person whom he saw not, but supposed authorised to direct him. We cannot but be struck by the fact, that the man who raised the lamp, was at the time in the theatre, and in the position at the moment as well as other circumstances, forbid the idea that the matter was done in the dark; yet the act was done. The lighted lamp was lifted, the torch of destruction gleamed at the top of the stage.

Mr. Rice (the Property man of the Theatre) says, that he saw the scene was over in which the lamp was used; he saw the lamp after it was lifted up; he was aware of the danger of its remaining in that position; and spoke to one of the carpenters, three times repeatedly 'lower the lamp and blow it out.' He did not see it put out; for he was drawn by his business to another part of the stage.

Mr. West declares that he was passing by to commence the second Act of the Pantomime, and saw the lamp up and heard Rice give directions to the Carpenter to extinguish it. Mr. Cook (the regular Carpenter of the Theatre) declares that he saw the carpenter, alluded to above, attempting to let down the lamp immediately after the order to let it down had been given; that he has no doubt the attempt was made in consequence of the order; that he saw the cords tangle and the lamp to oscillate several inches from its perpendicular position. The Chandelier above was moved by two cords which worked over two pulleys, inserted in a collar-beam of the roof, and the strings line from the beam to the lamp-stands. Mr. Cook thinks about 14 or 15 feet. But some idea may be had of the degree of oscillation.

Mr. Anderson (one of the performers of the Theatre) says, that he had remarked, even before the representation, how unsafe the light chandelier had proved; and that an at-

seem to move it had caused it to ride circularly round.

Mr. Yore (another workman of the machinery) most conclusively confirms this statement. He saw the attempt to lower the lamp, as it was perched among the scenery; the carpenter had failed in his efforts, that he then juked it and jostled it; that it was thus swerved from its perpendicular attitude, and brought into contact with the lower part of one of the front scenes. The scarf took fire, the flame rose, and tapering above to a point, must have reached the roof, which was elevated 6 or 7 feet only above the top of the scene.

We were assured, that there was not one *transparent* scene hanging; that is, a scene coated with varnish and extremely combustible—that there was only one paper scene hanging, which Mr. Ur the Prompter declares, was removed 6 or 8 feet behind the lamp. Thirty five scenes were at that moment hanging, exclusive of the flies or narrow borders, which represent the sky, sea, roof &c.—and of these, thirty four were canvas paintings; which though an extremely combustible material, are so the other scene covered with the flurks of the hemp as to catch the flame.

Efforts were made to extinguish the flame. Mr. Cook the carpenter, extended into the carpenter's gallery; but in vain. He did

succeed in letting down some of the scenes upon the floor, under an idea that this was the surest means of extinguishing the flame; but he could not distinguish the cords of the scene, that was then on fire. The roof soon caught, and the sense of danger compelled him to fly for his life.

The committee must now be under the necessity of drawing the attention of our fellow citizens, to the events which took place in front of the curtain. Mr. West states that immediately on his entering the stage to go on with his part, he heard some bustle behind the scenes, which he conceived to be a mere fracas—the cry of "fire" then saluted his ears, which gave him no serious apprehensions, as he knew that little accidents of this description had often taken place; that he heard some voices exclaim "don't be alarmed," which exclamation he repeated through a solicitude to prevent hurry and confusion; that he had not at that moment seen any flakes of fire fall behind the scene; but seeing them at length falling from the roof, he retired behind the scenes, and fanned the whole stage enveloped in flames: that he attempted to pull down some of the hanging pieces, when finding it unavailing he attempted to make good his own retreat.

Mr. Robertson, who was the only performer besides, that came before the audience, assured the committee, that at the moment when

he first discovered the flame, it was no longer than his handkerchief; that he repaired immediately to the stage, as near the back as he could come: "there he conveyed to the audience, not wishing to alarm them, by gesticulation to leave the house; that in the act of doing that, he discovered the flames moving rapidly, and then he exclaimed "the house (or the Theatre) is on fire; that he went directly to the stage-box where some 3 or 4 ladies were sitting, entreating them to jump into his arms; that he could save them by conveying them through the private stage-door; and that he still entreated, until he found it necessary to make his own escape; that his own retreat by the private door was intercepted by the flames: that he found it necessary to leap into the stage-box, and join the general crowd in the lobby; that he gained one of the front windows; assisted in passing out some ten or twelve females, but at last found it necessary to throw himself from the window."

This narrative is due to the exertions of a gentleman, who first sounded the alarm; and to whom there are a few who have not done the justice which he deserves.—Let us now return to the transmission of the fire—where the point of flame, reached the roof. The roof was unfortunately not plastered and sealed—there was a sheathing of plank pine plank we are told, nailed over the rafters; and over

these the shingles. The resin of the pine had perhaps oozed out of the plank, through the heat of our summers sun, stood in drops upon it. Yet however this may have been, as soon as the point of flame reached the roof than it caught. The fire spread with a rapidity through this combustible material, unparalleled, certainly never equalled by any of the too numerous fires which have desolated our city. In 4 or 5 minutes at least, the whole roof was one sheet of flame—it burst through the bulls eye in front—it sought the windows where the rarefied vapour sought its passage; fed by the vast column of air in the hollows of a Theatre, fed by the inflammable panelling and pillars of the boxes, by the dome of the pit, by the various ceiling of the lower boxes, until in a few minutes the flames were wrapt in its devouring flame or perished in death under the smouldering ruins of the building.

Here might we pause in our melancholy task. We have traced the conflagration to the fatal lamp, lifted as it was up, torn jerked and jolted out of its perpendicular position, to the ground—where it fell, it was engulfed in its fury. But there is one part of the subject which though it does not fall within the sphere of our description, or perhaps the line of our duty, is yet so interesting to the general mind. Why did so many die? Why have so many victims perished on

this melancholy occasion? It cannot be said, that it was the combustibility of the building, and the rapidity of the fire, great as they undoubtedly were, which altogether produced this mortality of the species—for we cannot believe, if large vomitories had been erected for the passage of the crowd, if there had been doors enough to admit them, that more than *one-tenth* of an audience should have perished on the occasion.

It was in the opinion of the committee that this ill construction of the theatre itself, was principally its cause. How numerous were the occasions on which it had long before been said, as the crowd was slowly retiring at the end of a play, "Suppose the house were on fire, what should we do?" Yet we slept with too fatal a security over the evil—we trusted and we are ruined. New doors were not opened; the winding stair case was not straightened, the access to the avenues of the theatre was not enlarged.

Even the relics of our fellow citizens as they lay, pointed out the causes of this fatality. They were found strewn in heaps at the foot of the narrow stair case which lead from the Boxes—and though with less profusion, on the ground immediately under the lobby of the Boxes above, from which lobby their retreat down the stairs had been intercepted by the crowd which choked them up. On that fatal night, there were in the Pit and Boxes

518 dollar tickets and 80 children—exclusive of fifty persons who were in the galleries. Of these 599, but 133 escaped through the common avenue and although the spectators in the pit may have escaped, except a few who jumped into the flames, yet the crowd in the lower and upper boxes had no other resource than to press through a narrow angular stair case, or to leap the windows. The Committee, not being particularly conversant with the construction of theatres, have requested Mr. Twaits, one of the managers of this theatre, to furnish his ideas on the subject. He has favoured us with a statement which we beg leave to incorporate with our report, in the words following, to wit:

"By the request of the Committee of Enquiry into the cause of the late dreadful calamity at the Theatre on the night of the 11th inst. I assert, that the loss of so many valuable lives, and the distress which has been felt by all on the occasion, is wholly attributable to the construction of the late theatre and its materials.

"In all theatres, that I have seen, except the late one, there have been three distinct exits, one from the Pit and one of the Gallery. The late Theatre has but in the centre of each side a spacious hall, with broad and straight passages which terminated in the Lobbies of the Boxes; three entrance



to the Pit, one in the front and one on each side; and four entrances and two Galleries, two on each side. These avenues were firm and commodious, and in their construction presented every facility for escape, when any danger assailed the audience. Miserable reverse! In the late Richmond Theatre, but one entrance to the Boxes and Pit; and that so narrow, that two persons could scarcely pass at the same time—the way then lying through a gloomy passage to a narrow winding stair case, which terminated in a narrow Lobby.—It is therefore, evident, that this ever to be lamented loss, which has at once deprived your city of some of its brightest ornaments, and desolated many families, is wholly attributable to the mal-construction of the late Theatre, which certainly offered no means of speedy escape. The rapidity of the conflagration must have been caused by the unfinished state of the building, no plastered ceiling or wall to prevent the communication of flame.”

The committee cannot close their melancholy labors without expressing one hope, that invariable as our own calamities have been we may not have suffered altogether in vain; that our own misfortunes may serve as becomes to the rest of our countrymen, and that no theatres should be permitted to be erected in the other cities of the U. States and every facility has been presented for the

AN ORDINANCE.

To amend the Ordinance, entitled “An Ordinance concerning the conflagration of the Theatre in the City of Richmond.”

(PASSED the 28th Dec. 1811.)

Whereas it is represented to the President and Common Council of the City of Richmond, in Common Hall assembly, that the remains of their unfortunate Fellow-Citizens, who perished in the conflagration of the Theatre, on the night of the twenty-sixth inst. cannot with convenience, be removed from the spot on which they were found, and some of them were so far consumed as to fall to ashes—and that it would be more satisfactory to their relations that they should be interred on the spot where they perished, and that the site of the Theatre, should be consecrated as the sacred deposit of their bones and ashes.

Be it therefore ordained by the authority aforesaid: That the Committee appointed by the ORDINANCE entitled an Ordinance concerning the conflagration of the “Theatre in the City of Richmond,” instead of burying the remains of our Fellow-Citizens in the public burying ground, shall cause them to be interred within the Area formerly inclosed in the walls of the theatre: And the said Committee is hereby authorised and empowered to purchase of the proprietors thereof as soon as may be possible, all the ground included within such walls.

And be it further ordained, That in addition to the duty imposed upon that Committee by the before recited Ordinance, they be requested to inclose with suitable walls of brick of the height of five feet at the least the whole of the ground formerly covered by the said Theatre; and the Common-Hall of the City of Richmond hold the land of the City pledged to defray the expences of purchasing the said Area, and of the inclosure thereof, to be paid out of any money in the hands of the chamberlain, at the time the said inclosure shall be erected by the said Committee, and to be paid by him to their draft or drafts.

This Ordinance shall take effect from the passing thereof.

A Copy, N. SHEPPARD, c. c. n.

Resolutions Adopted by the Executive, on Saturday, the 26th December, 1811.

Resolved unanimously. That in testimony of the profound sorrow, which as individuals and members of this body, we feel for the loss of our much lamented friend and fellow citizen George Wm Smith, late a member of our commonwealth, and which is common with the afflicted people of this city, we feel for the loss of those other worthy and meritorious citizens who fell a sacrifice to the flames in the late conflagration of the Theatre; and that as a tribute of the very high

respect which we entertain for his and their memory, we will for the space of thirty days wear crape on our left arms.

Resolved also, That agreeably to an arrangement proposed by the committee appointed by the Common-Hall of this city, to superintend the interment of such of the remains of the unfortunate sufferers as have been saved, we will join the funeral procession.

Extract from the minutes.

Attest, Wm. ROBERTSON, C^{ky} of E. C.

SUSPICIONS being entertained that the search in the ruins of the Theatre has been incomplete, the under signed have thought proper to order that the Funeral be postponed until Sunday the 30th inst. at eleven o'clock.

JOHN ADAMS,
GAB. RALSTON,
WM. HAY, Jun.
JNO. G. GAMBLE.

December 23.

INTERMENT OF THE DEAD.

The arrangements for this melancholy occasion could not be completed before Sunday and as the place of interment had been designated from the Church to the area where the Theatre stood, the land and cleared space, the funeral procession did not move as was

originally contemplated by the Committee from the Baptist-Meeting-House, near the Theatre, where the interment was intended to be made.

The mournful procession began at Mr. Edward Trent's on the mainstreet, where the remains of the unfortunate Mrs. Patterson lay. In front the Corps; then the Clergy—Ladies in carriages—the Executive Council—Directors of the Bank—Members of the Legislature—the Court of Hastings—Common Hall—Citizens on foot and on Horseback. Why paint the length and solemnity of the line? They moved up the main street until they struck the cross street leading to the Bank—here they were joined by the Corps of poor JULIANA HARVIE, who expired at her brother-in-law's, the Cashire of the Bank—they moved up the Capitol Hill and at the Capitol were joined by the bearers of two large Mahogany boxes, in which were enclosed the ashes and relics of the deceased. The mournful procession then moved to "the devoted spot;" and in the centre of the area where once stood the pit, these precious relics were buried in one common grave. The service for the dead was read by the Rev. Mr. Buchanan. The whole scene defies description. A whole day balled in tears!—How awful the transition on this devoted spot!—A few days since, it was the theatre of joy and merriment—animated by

the sound of music & the hum of a delighted multitude. It is now a funeral pyre! the receptacle of the relics of our friends!—and in a short time a monument will stand upon it to point out where their ashes lie!

Register of the Dead.

In addition to the 63 persons who were published in our last, from the Report of the Committee, we are pained to be compelled to subjoin the following melancholy list:

Perished in the Flames!

Miss Elvira Court,	Jean Baptiste Rezi,
Mrs. Pickitt, not wife	Thomas Lecrois.
of Mr. G. P.	Robert Ferrill, a mul-
Miss Littlepage,	lato boy.

Expired since.

On Saturday night, Mrs. John Bosher—and at 11 o'clock on Sunday night, Edward James Harvie, Esq. in consequence of the injury he received in his efforts to save his unfortunate sister from the flames!!

Not one life has been lost from Manchester. Mrs. Hatcher has broken a lamp.

The committee of arrangement appointed by the Common Hall of this city, believing that no one place of worship will be found large enough to accommodate all those who may choose to unite in devotion on Wednesday next, take the liberty to recommend that

divine service be performed at all the places of public worship within the city, at 11 o'clock on the before mentioned day:

The articles of Jewellery found amongst the ruins of the Theatre, have been deposited with Dr. John Adams, to be delivered to the relatives of the deceased when called for.

December 30, 1811.

From the Virginia Patriot.

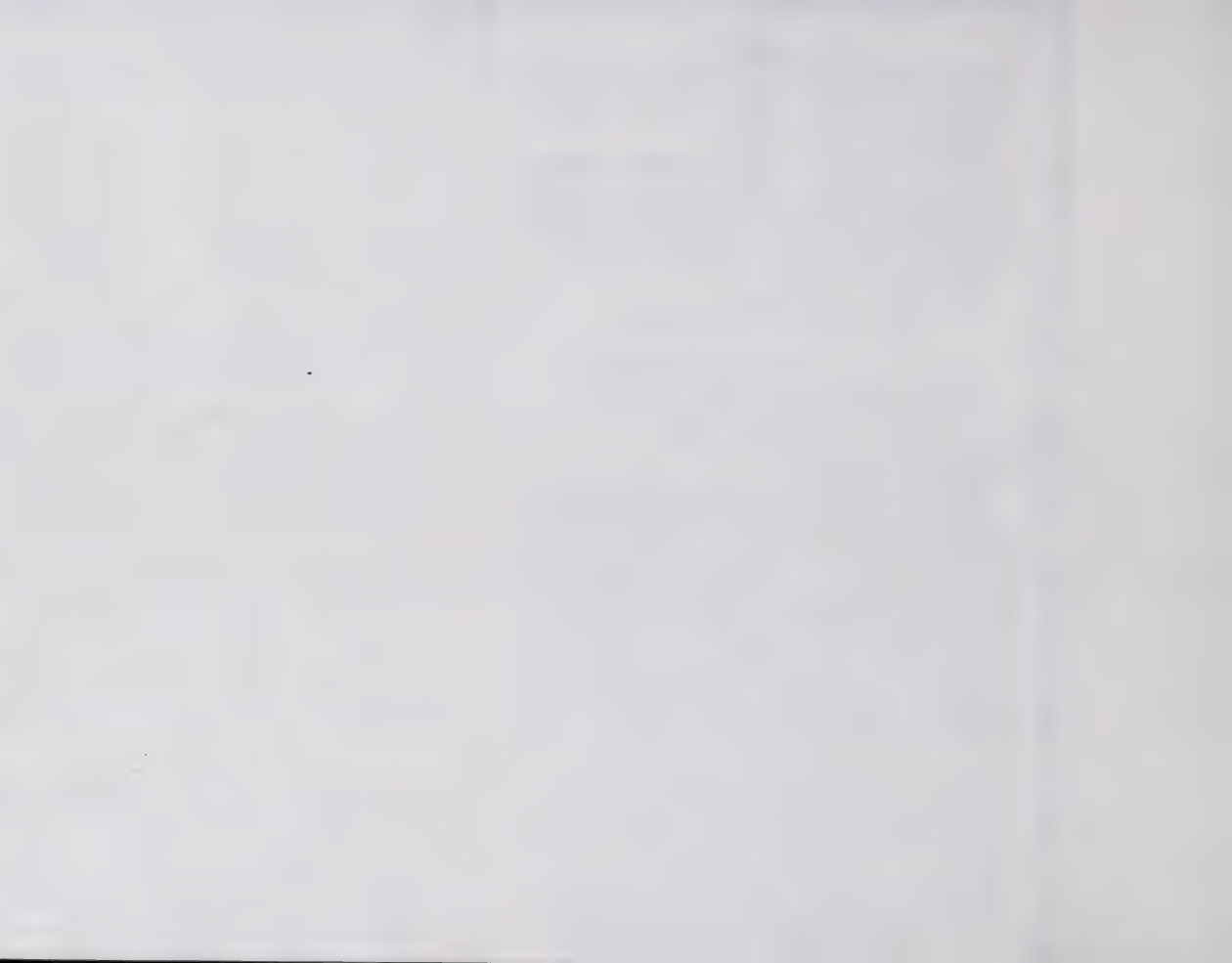
RICHMOND, Dec. 31.

"WHAT HAPPENED AT THE FIRE!!!"

— "quæque ipse incertina vidi,
Et quædam pars magis ibi."

At about half past ten I met with a gentleman in the lobby, who like myself was not much interested with the proceeding; and after some desultory conversation we agreed to walk to his house, which is convenient to the theatre, we had not gone thirty paces, when we heard a confused noise; on looking around we perceived the theatre, for the most part enveloped in flames—we having a wife and son (as far as he is concerned) were related as well as I, to some acquaintance. I observing a number of temple acquaintances at the windows, took my stand under one, and was fortunate enough to save them all from destruction; though the doors of many of them were a smolder—the last I received being a very young lady, although frequently cal-

led to particularly, fell in the unawares, while I had another lady, who was at the time so situated that I lay some time inconsidering; I am glad to hear that neither of the ladies are much injured—after I arose, I looked up, but saw no person at the window—the flames had then burst through, and the shrieks and cries had ceased. I then, with what gentlemen I could meet with, who were not frantic from their losses, proceeded to help the helpless; some ladies of the first rank were found lying so discoloured by fire and smoke, as not to be known; deaf to the cries of the bereaved, we attended to, and carried off all who were unable to assist themselves, one of whom, Dr. McCaw, after having saved the lives of numbers, by throwing himself out at a window, has disabled himself. Our worthy governor too in a humane attempt lost his life. I will not undertake to name the many worthy characters who have perished in the flames, the progress of which was so rapid, and the ties between husband and wife, parent and child, sister and brother, friend and friend so strong, that no one could plan of self-preservation. I am glad, however, that the intervening between the first appearance of fire and the last person saved, was not more than six minutes. Upon examining the neighbouring houses, it was dreadful to behold the heat and flames of some of the first characters in the city, who now lie subject



to medical treatment—but I know of none that are not thought to be recoverable. It is a mistake in "The American Standard" that Mr. Fickett is dead—it is also a mistake that Mr. Gerardin lost two children—God knows he lost enough; in losing an amiable wife, and a son whom he doted. The number lost cannot yet be ascertained.

A CITIZEN.

TO THE CITIZENS OF RICHMOND.

In the sincerity of afflicted minds and deeply wounded hearts, permit us to express the anguish which we cannot but consider ourselves the innocent cause.—From a liberal and enlightened community we fear not reproaches, but we are conscious that many have too much cause to wish they had never known us. To their mercy we appeal for forgiveness, not for a crime committed, but for one which could not be prevented. Our own loss cannot be estimated but it, certainly —is true (with one exception) we have not to lament the loss of life.—but we have lost our friends, our partners, our property and in part, our homes. No is it that we are in this strange situation we are banished from your hospitable city. No more do we expect to feel that glow of pleasure which pervades a grateful slave while it receives favours liberally bestowed.—Never again shall we behold that generous humanity

which so eagerly displayed itself to soothe the victims of disease, nor view with exultation the benevolent who fostered the fatherless, and shed a ray of comfort on the departing soul of a dying mother. Here then we cease—the eloquence of Grief, is Silence.

James Rose,	William Anderson,
Hopkins Robertson,	Thomas Burke,
Charles Young,	A. Flacide,
Charles Durang,	F. W. Green,
William Twaits,	William Clark.

From the Richmond Enquirer of January 2.

There are some of the unfortunate victims of Thursday night, whose particular fates we have in vain attempted to penetrate.—We have taken uncommon pains to collect an authentic narrative of this disastrous night; we have requested the aid of every person whom we had heard was capable of furnishing any information and to whom the subject was not too tender to be mentioned, yet it is with more pain we have failed in our efforts.—We should be very sorry even to wear the name of any one who had been guilty of the severity of any one who partook in this deplorable riot—but this appearance at the public attention.—It is with a painful and cold and collected as to be able to thus mark the horrors of the night; several who were able to point out particular details in the disastrous scene of Thursday are no doubt

unknown to us: and some who have promised to reduce their narratives to paper, have been prevented from doing so by their engagements of their feelings.—The following are the only statements which we have received. They are enough, however, to communicate a faint idea of the collective horrors of the scene; what a group would have breathed upon the canvass, if a few faint strokes of the pencil are so affecting! If such were the feelings of a few individuals, what must have been the situation of 300 people!—How impotent is the pencil of Raphael in the Vatican, where he attempts to paint the conflagration of Rome!

We should still proceed in our researches; but the reader has contemplated horrors enough. It is time to leave the paths of death. We have dwelt long enough upon this melancholy theme; and we are anxious to relieve our columns from the sombre sable of woe.—With this paper, therefore, let us cease the strains of grief: let us drop the subject. There is only another point of view in which we yet propose to consider it; but this is not directly calculated to excite horror, or the feelings of pain: it is rather to instruct. Let us open the pages of history, and see whether this is the only scene which has been attested by so severe a vengeance—whether this is the only scene, whom “the paths of posterity have led to the grave.”

We have learnt nothing very particularly authentic of the fate of Mrs. Thomas Wilson—we have merely heard that with the cool and deliberate resolution of a strong mind, she remained for a time in her first position, fearing rather the consequences of precipitation and tumult, than the rapidity of the flames. They indeed baffled all reasonable calculation, and too many have fallen victims to this fatal mistake! Mrs. Wilson perished—one of the best of wives, the best of mothers, the most exemplary step-mother that ever lived! Words cannot express the agony of her distressed family—the deep dejection of all her friends.

The fate of Mrs. Heron is also wrapt in oblivion. She had been unfortunate enough to lose her husband by a disastrous accident—and her children have now lost their mother by one still more rapid and resistless. She was eminently true to all the domestic charities of life. But neither the bond of affection, of friendship, nor respect could snatch her from the tomb.

Mrs. Cook, the lamented wife of Mr. William Cook, and her daughter Rebecca, had been married only a few years, when their late husband and father weep over their ashes. Three motherless children are left behind her.

But why spread before the reader all the havoc of the scene? The young have sunk as

well as the married; the interesting Margaret Copland, the third daughter of Mr. C. of Copland; Patey Griffin, the only child of her aged mother; Miss Nelson, Miss Page, Miss Craig, all of them dear to their families and friends, William Southgate the only prop of the family of Wright Southgate deceased. Each has his merits: each has the public tear.

What a scene was exhibited for several hours after the tragic event! Many were ignorant of the fate of their friends. Almost every one had his fears and suspicions. During the next day, two persons could scarcely meet without exchanging expressions full of solicitude;—"Have you lost any of your family?"—"Is your family safer?" "I am glad of it, I am glad of it."

Many escaped with extreme difficulty. Several have broken a limb. Mr. John Richards has broken a leg; Mr. Carter Page has his. Miss Pendleton has also broken a limb. Mrs. Scott of Fairfax, is much burnt. Some were severely burnt whose clothes were whole.

We trust that the number of the dead is now exhausted. We give it entire in this paper. We had understood that some strangers had arrived at particular taverns whose names were unknown—and these were said to be missing. We have enquired, and are happy to find it a mistake.

I occupied on Thursday evening a seat in the lower corner box on the left of the entrance into the Theatre. The first I saw of the fire was a piece of paper in full blaze descending from the top and was then about fifteen feet above the level of the stage—ere it alighted, a general cry of "fire" pervaded the house; and the persons immediately quitted their seats. I was among the last to do so, and when I got half the distance to the stairway I met with Mrs. Scott, a lady of my acquaintance, who I entreated to be calm, and not too precipitate, as her safety depended on deliberation: her answer was "I am not alarmed and will do so." we advanced a few feet and a loud cry that it was a "false alarm" induced me to return to the corner where I had sat and looked through a door then open and there I discovered the scenery in full blaze and the canopy on fire. I hastened back to the crowd. But being a stranger at the Theatre and ignorant of its construction, I knew of no mode of escape except through the avenue I had ascended to the boxes. I found it blocked up by the crowd, and light being very vivid, I discovered that the persons in it were principally ladies; they were greatly alarmed and crying for relief, and entreated the crowd not to destroy them, still persisting in the belief that as the fire was in the rear, the danger was not very en-

incent; unwilling to crowd on those before me, and being too lame to encounter a crowd, I refrained from pressing upon the mass. In a minute I found my hands were fast in a black thick smoke rushed upon us, so instantaneously suffocating, that those who had yielded to their fears by caving sunk without a groan, and I found myself in front no longer crowded except by prostrate bodies. I advanced until the eternal light ascertained to me that I was opposite a window near the head of the stairs; this I endeavored to force, but the bodies of some persons standing in that direction stopped me two feet short of it. In the efforts made after the smoke reached me I must have consumed in half a minute. I then was compelled to breathe this offensive smoke, which was so intolerable that I could only make one convulsive struggle to advance, and I then sunk senseless. My last recollection was that my feet were descending; but whether the floor or stairway were broken, or I had reached the descent, I am not conscious. I heard no noise. Insensible I descended to the level of the pit, and there a strong current of fresh air revived me, as I lay among a heap of prostrate persons. I struggled to rise and found myself with my feet upon a lady clinging to me, she entreated me to save her, and as she was unable to support herself, I carried her in a vigorous direction to find the outer door, which I

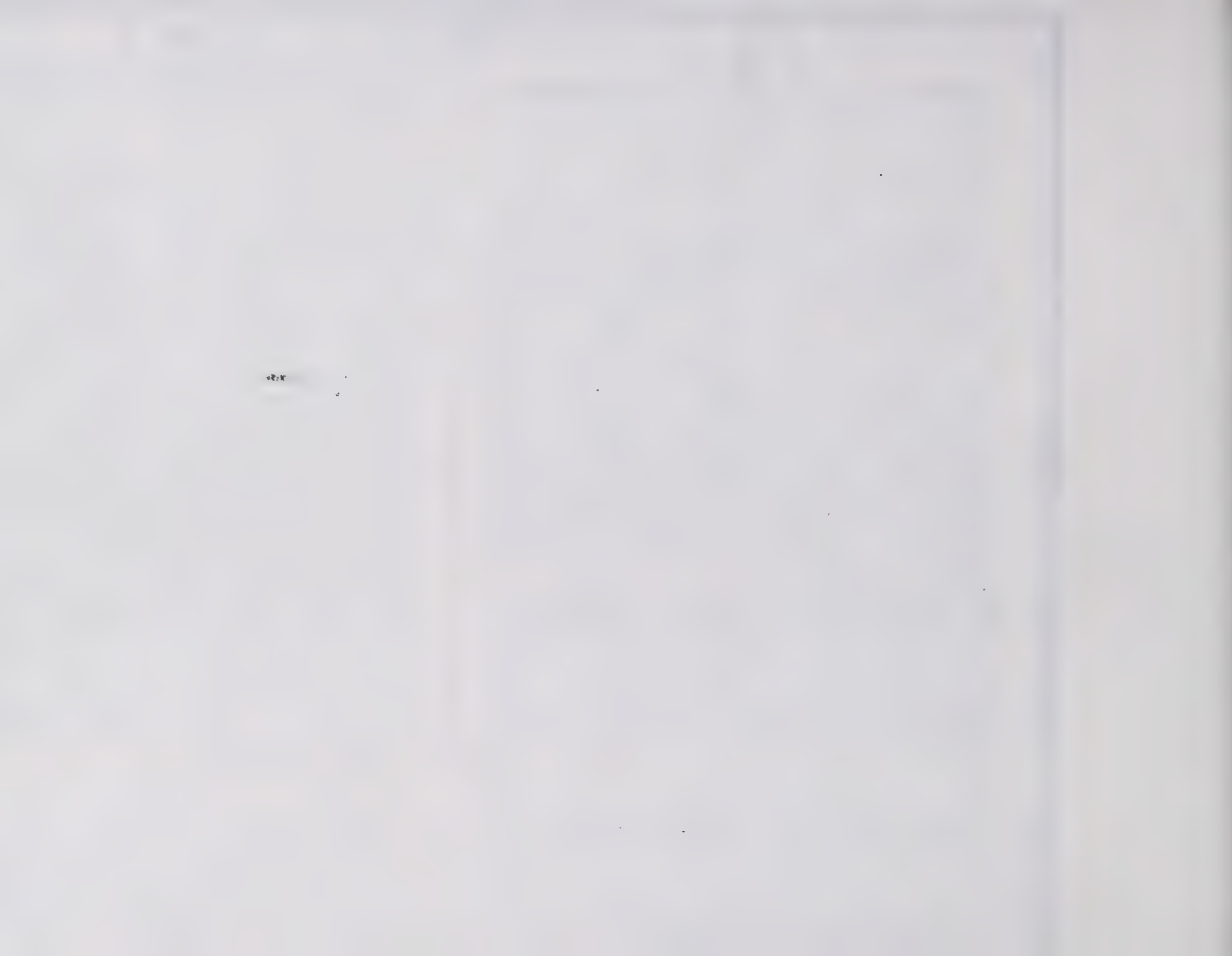
avoided from a mis-act that had almost proved fatal. I saw several persons falling from the windows into the street in full blaze, and my impression was that becoming desperate by the fire, they were plunging from the balconies into the pit, the place of all others most to be avoided: in this effort to find the way out I saw several gentlemen running to and fro, to whom I addressed the inquiry "which is the way out?" but obtained no answer. I at length determined to find the avenue through, with the great column of fire entered and by running towards it soon gained the door. When we got out, the fire was pouring through the front windows, and ere we had advanced for the roof tumbled in. The lady whom I rescued, still claimed my assistance and I carried her to a place of safety—I saw no more of the scene until the way was cleared down, and do not know if any, or how many got out after we did, but I am confident if those from without had run in, many who only trespassed and were hurried out, had they regained strength to rise, would have been saved.

J. C. JACKSON.

December 30.

ANY OTHER.

SIR—Agreeing to your request, I need not state one or two instances attending such an escape, from the fact I heard of the awful sight of the 28th inst. I carried what



me to the play my niece and the two Miss Herons, Alfred Gilliat, Peter Kirby and Nicholas Graham, nephews of my wife and self, the House was much crowded; for the girls, I with difficulty procured seats among some of their friends, mostly ladies in box No. 8, and for the boys, seats in the back of box No. 7.—I was sitting, when the curtain rose in the second act of the off-piece next the boys, immediately after which the alarm of fire was given, and instantly I saw the fire falling on the stage.—On rising from my seat I desired the boys to take care of themselves and escape as soon as possible, and proceeded myself towards the seats in the next box which were occupied by my niece, the Miss Herons and their party, with the intention of assisting them out of the House, I reached the place without much difficulty, but the party had all left their seats and in endeavoring to return thro' the lobby I was carried with the current of the crowd opposite to the place from whence I had departed and found that Mrs. Gallego, Miss Conyers and the three Boys had all left their seats.—In the then state of affairs it was evidently fruitless for me to search for either of the persons of whom I had been in pursuit, and at this juncture I began to think of my- self for the first time.—I was in the lobby next in box No. 7, and the flames were ap-

proaching with a degree of fury and rapidity that perhaps was never exceeded—hitherto the scene had been all bustle, confusion and consternation; it now changed to one of awful horror and desperation that beggars all description—all ceremony was forgotten in conforming to the first law of nature—I perceived the centre window in the front end of the house and determined to endeavour to reach it—with the assistance of a sword cane which I had in my hand, and the partition betwixt the lobby and box No. 7. I mounted on the heads of the crowd betwixt me and the window—by this time the House was in total darkness from smoke, but in groping I providently reached the side of the window, surrounded by the unavailing and afflicting cries of those suffering around me.—I stepped within the window, and with difficulty raised the lower sash with the intention of slipping out, and had thrust my foot thro' for that purpose when the sash was suddenly pressed down and caught my foot between it and the window still. I extricated one foot but could not extricate the other, and those behind me who had seen that attempt, stood about over me and raised the lower sash with a pole, and down, did so: in this situation I found myself separated from all assistance that I gave myself up as lost, the flames however rushed over my head, and the introduction of fresh air at the bottom of the window gave me new

life,—those behind me being no longer able to keep me down, I with a last effort raised the window, extricated my foot and jumped out, without receiving any injury from the fall, tho' much injured in one of my feet from the bruises occasioned by the pressure of the wind w. sash, and I have other wounds and bruises received in the lobby and window, so slight however as under other considerations not to be worth naming.—Mr. John Lynch, merchant of this city was I believe the only person who passed through the window after me. I left many others about it, all of whom must have perished—so rapid was the fire that I do not think three minutes could have elapsed from the first alarm until I reached the window; at any rate with all the exertion that I could make, about thirty feet would I think include the whole space of my progress from the first alarm until I reached the window and at that time many were expiring with suffocation.—In the midst of so much sorrow and grief it affords me much consolation that the three boys and girls whom I carried with me have all escaped with their lives, and so the effort which I made with the view of assisting them were unavailing. The scene which ensued out of the house was witnessed by many, and like that witness will long be remembered, but probably never adequately described.

I am respectfully sir, Your ob't servant,
M. W. HANCOCK.

ANOTHER.

SIR,

In consequence of the conversation, we had this evening, I take up my pen, and without further preface, state, that when the commencement of the dreadful fire of Thursday night was announced from the Stage, I was leaning over the back of the front box, which was the next to the north side of the Theatre: on my left hand was Lieut. Gibbon, and on the bench I sat below, was Mrs. Galego, Miss Conyers, Mrs. Gibbon, Mrs. Braxton, Mr. Venable and others, whose names I cannot recollect: the alarm of fire was immediately succeeded by a cry out, 'tis a false alarm, there is no danger, and as we did not imagine any, both Lieut. Gibbon and myself, endeavored to quiet the apprehensions of the Ladies in the next I fixed my eyes upon the Stage: the scene which was down, had the appearance of a transparency, behind which a mass of light seemed to descend; but this did not convince me, or any person near me: a moment however decided, the front scene is in flames, and I then resolved to give all that assistance which I could render, and I rushed down the Theatre, and arrived at the foot of the box. Lieut. Gibbon did the same, and with me, I wish to be remembered, was in a state of great anxiety, and to all appearance I had her in my arms, and my left arm, at this instant we proceeded

towards the head of the stairs, when Gibbon said, "Lynch, leave Sally to me, I am strong enough to carry her, she is light and you can save somebody else." I replied, "God bless you, Gibbon, there is the stairs." I then turned round and proceeded for my original situation in order to take out some of the other Ladies, and as I returned, I perceived the dreadful element rush with the rapidity of lightning from the stage, along the facing of the upper boxes, taking both sides at the same time, and from the dreadful column of smoke which was then chrown down upon the centre of the front boxes, the flames must have met them; all was now utter darkness in the lobby, and suffocation threatened. I could not do any thing, I was in the midst of a crowd of sufferers, the cries were dreadful, it was an awful period, and only that the end window was then burst open, we must all, that were in that lobby, certainly have been suffocated; the opening of the window brought relief and hope. I moved on with the throng to the window, and got to the west side of it. There was a gentleman in a light coloured coat, fixed fast in the window seat (whom I since understand was Mr. Hancock) it appeared to me that his legs and thighs were fixed between the sill of the window and the brick work: men and women were precipitating themselves on his shoulders, regardless of his entreaties to allow him to free himself,

and of the fate that awaited them below: many bodies were lying on the ground to appearance dead, and the flames were passing out of the top of the window; I was undetermined, and at that moment I was pushed away towards the west wall of the Theatre; again suffocation threatened, flames were rushing on in all directions, my hair caught fire, (for my hat was gone,) hope deserted me, I was struck with the horror at the idea of being burnt alive. I rushed towards the window, waving my hands as quick as possible over my head and clothes; this was a dreadful moment, I saw many drop down on each side of me suffocated, and I passed over some bodies on my way: the window was now free, and I was scarcely on the bottom of it, when I heard an awful crash behind me, I threw myself out and providence preserved me. I am with heartfelt feelings of congratulation on your own providential escape,

Very respectfully,

Sir,

Your most obed^t.

JOHN LYNCH

Richmond 29th Dec. 1841.

ANOTHER,

DEAR SIR—Being told, that for the purpose of collecting the best information concerning all the circumstances attending the late dreadful conflagration, you were desirous of obtaining from each individual who had

escaped, a short account of the manner and circumstances under which such escape was effected; I send you the following statement:

As the curtain arose for the commencement of the second scene of the pantomime, I was standing in the lobby on the lower range of boxes, conversing with some of my friends through the broken pannel of a box about thirty feet from the head of the stairs. This box was entirely filled; among others who were in it, and who have perished, I remember Mrs. Gallego, Miss Conyers, Lieutenant Gibbon, and Mr. Venable.—Immediately after the rising of the curtain, and as the scene commenced I saw several flakes of fire fall about the centre of the stage; but supposed it was probably the falling of some ornament or light intended to illumine the scene.—The cry of "fire" was instantly given.—I advanced a few steps into the lobby, enquiring from whence the alarm arose; and met several persons, some of them known to me, calling out that it was a false alarm.—I turned about and now saw the smoke rising, and a very large bright light behind it—and then felt assured that the danger was on fire in the quarters.—The confusion was horrible, and I could feel no fear whatever from the flames, and was only apprehensive that in the hurry and confusion of the crowd, many would be crushed to death—and with other sentiments in my mind, I turned to those around me, that the danger was not

gratified, and beseeched them not to press so fast on those before—we called to the winds; I then turned now to force my way back to the side of the box I had left, to calm the fears of those with whom I had been speaking and to wait until the crowd had passed.—This however was impossible.—The column of the crowd in which I was enclosed, bore me irresistibly, but slowly along towards the stairs, still feeling no fears of being overtaken by the flames, I continued to hold in my cloak and pressing my weight backwards, to give as far as possible an opportunity to those on the head of the stairs, (where the pressure already seemed dreadful) to effect their escape—suddenly I perceived a thick, black, hot smoke, curling down our heads—persons were no longer to be distinguished—after darkness prevailed—and a terrible noise fast approaching—for the first moment I was seriously alarmed—and by the most violent exertions endeavored to make my way to the head of the stairs, it appeared to me I could not gain an inch. Those around me were sinking—my own strength failed, and I verily believed that I should never see the light again; but his officers window being open it was forced open, the fresh air soon which dissipated the smoke and revived us to new exertion; a universal scream of mingled joy and despair was given, and a rush towards the windows; those next it seemed unable to

move, and cried out that "they were pressed to death"—I was within a few paces of it; and by desperate exertions endeavoured to reach it; I could not. In a last effort I despair, assisting myself by the shoulder of some one next me, I drew my feet up and thrown by the united impulse of others, and my own exertions, with my feet directly on the window sill, at the same instant fortunately seizing a broken fragment of the ash, I passed my head under it reached the ground without material injury; I left many behind me.

THOMAS F. MASON.

December 20th.

Mr. Editor,

SIR—My friend Mr. Thomas Nelson has informed me, that you wished me to state the particulars of my providential escape from the dreadful fire which consumed the Theatre on Thursday night last. They are as follow: The late period at which I arrived at the play-house, compelled me to ascend to the upper row of Boxes to procure a seat for Mrs. Pendleton and myself, where we remained until I discovered the second spark of fire on the stage in front of the curtain, when I immediately heard the cry of fire from behind—I then left my seat, and proceed along the pass-way, towards the head of the stair case, entreating the terrified females to have patience, and not precipitate them-

selves into the immense crowd that was pressing forward, lest we should be trampled to death, believing, that by waiting a few minutes, we should have more room, and consequently descend with more expedition and safety.

In a few seconds, however, I was convinced by the effect of an indelible current of steam on my flesh, and smoke on my lungs, that I had miscalculated, and that our escape must be instantaneous or not at all, as suffocation threatened. With an energy which nothing but such a dreadful crisis could inspire, I rushed forward, retaining my wife's arm locked fast in mine, up till I attained the first turn in the stair case just below, or perhaps nearly opposite the window, next the front corner, on the lower, or side next the meeting house. At this place, the crowd behind me trod on the tail of my large loose great coat, completely to stop my progress, and had well nigh thrown me backwards, which nothing but an exertion I did not think myself capable of making, prevented. In this situation, my wife (great God, figure to yourself my agony!) was torn from me by the force of the crowd, and I was separated from her. In this separation, numbers were trampled down, and I did verily believe, that the worst part of those unfortunate victims. I thought I had then lost the object which stimulated my exertions and remained perfectly motionless for

some seconds, having fixed myself in the corner of the brick wall to prevent being forced down, and exerted on the instant an extraordinary effort to save myself from the impending destruction, by following the prodigious crowd that was then wedging me in my fortunate corner. While these reflections were arising in my mind, I heard the window forced open by a multitude of men and felt the reviving influence of the delicious air which rushed upon me, and invigorated the efforts which then saved my life. By exertions which I now consider as supernatural, I reached the window, which at that anxious moment I enjoyed undisputed possession of, and after looking down to ascertain where I might alight with least injury to myself as well as to others, who had preceded me, I seated myself on the window sill, and saved myself off very dangerously and gradually reflecting at the same time, that if I could contrive my clothes to touch the wall as I descended, the force of my passage down would be some what broken. I soon experienced the happy reality of this experiment, for I landed on my feet, and have never since felt the least soreness or inconvenience from my manner of escape.— As, sir, I have in a hasty manner complied with the request of the last of my auditors.— I will endeavour to describe to you my sensations for some time after I had escaped, for I am so miraculously preserved myself,

from what I saw before I got out of the house, and what I saw afterwards. I was agonised with the conviction that a beloved wife and child had perished. You who are a husband and a parent, must if possible, finish the picture.

I am, sir,

Your most obedient,

EDMUND PENDLETON, Jr.

ANOTHER.

G. Huntington Bacchus states for the information and at the request of Mr. Ritchie that he and his party were in the upper boxes; that he was standing in the box when he and his party was sitting close to the fire place on the left side of the Theatre, that the first intimation he had of fire was from the two sparks, or bushes of fire that smothered each other as they fell upon the stage. Mr. Robertson was then on his knees before the portrait of a beautiful Lady, which was represented upon the back or after scene, and as I supposed, was performing a part of the pantomime, for I heard no exclamation of his, and after the sparks fell Mr. Robertson then rose and in a loud voice, reported that the house was on fire. I was then occupied in detaining Miss Maria Nelson, Miss Mary Page, and Miss Elizabeth Pendleton by persuasion, from running into the pressing multitude, pointed to the stage and

informed them that the distance was such, that the fire could not possibly arrive so as to injure us in our retreat, and they would endanger their lives by the pressure of the crowd. Miss Nelson and Miss Page concurred with me in opinion. Miss Peedleton shrieked and was apparently fainting; I caught her, and by rather stern advice and caution, which I used, she revived, and recovered her faculties. I then turned to Misses Nelson and Page, who seemed very calm and collected, at this instant Miss Peedleton forsook us, and the same moment, the scenery descended in a terrible blaze upon the stage; we then began gently to move out of the box, and we had just emerged from the door, when it appeared to me at the most, if not all of the canopy or vault of the theatre, fell in, with considerable noise like the rushing of flames, into the pit, or hanging round the gallery and upper boxes like curtains and canopy—I suppose it was one minute from the first falling of the sparks to the falling of the scenery, I did not look again towards the stage. I moved moderately forward about 12 or 15 feet toward the stairs and the faller as I saw it near—It was not just light enough to see blackness, it was a very dense smoke which was rapidly rushing and whirling over our heads; I heard the trucking of a whetstone, it struck me forcibly as a most painful thought. Right here and at this

hates got down into the pit and passed out of the West side, it would certainly have given vent for the upper fire, and by that means, also, every soul have been saved. I am yours with sincere respect.

JEDEDIAH ALLEN.

—
ANOTHER.

DEAR SIR,

What I know concerning that destructive fire from actual observation, is, although limited, very correct, having had no particular relative to protect; every object of distress, that came within my observation from the beginning to the end of the scene is as clearly before my mind's eye now as it was at the unfortunate crisis.

I told you, that Mr. G. and myself were walking up the hill, not more than twenty or thirty paces from the theatre when the first flash appeared—he ran frantic to the protection of his wife and child. I, coolly and deliberately to that of all within my power—the first I helped in distress repaired my whole attention—at the N. W. window in the theatre a number of ladies appeared, and when they saw the flames—some of them to jump out, they did and were all safe. Some of them for two hours; several were injured by the flames—Mrs. M'Rae and Mrs. Packet were undoubtedly the two last who escaped from the ruins—Mr. Rich-

ard's family with many more had been received before I was engaged.—Although the storm knocked down, I received all those who were that wind saw and no man ever assisted one of them. If it were necessary I could be particular in Mr. Pickens's case; as she said more from unfeeling men than any boy I saw; as soon as she was safe, I ran round the building to see if any body else could be saved; I saw that all within were lost, my attention was next drawn to the door, near which I had stood from the beginning; there the black vest and his blue boots of man who are now in a fair way of recovery were trodden down by a gaping multitude; I with the assistance of a few whom I do not recollect, dragged out many apparently dead—among whom were Miss Davis, Mr. Tiffin and the celebrated Miss Harvie; these were all the bodies I recognised, the last of whom appeared most likely to live, for she could speak; but the others, although none were damaged externally, were apparently lifeless.

The most pleasing part of my life was that which I spent in this act of preservation, but the next morning in consulting the preserved and seeking the lost; you saw part of that yourself.

Your friend and servant

D. DOYLE.

MEMORABLE ACCIDENTS.

copied from Linsimbe's Tablet of Merit.

The Ample Theatre at Fiderica, in Italy, fell in and killed fifty thousand people, A. D. 1718. The ruins of it now remain at Casale di Stello.

A fire happened at a barn at Barwell, Cambridgeshire, at a Puppet-show, when 100 persons lost their lives, A. D. 1727.

The roof of the church at Fearn, in Scotland fell in doing the service, and killed 60 persons, Oct. 13. 1742.

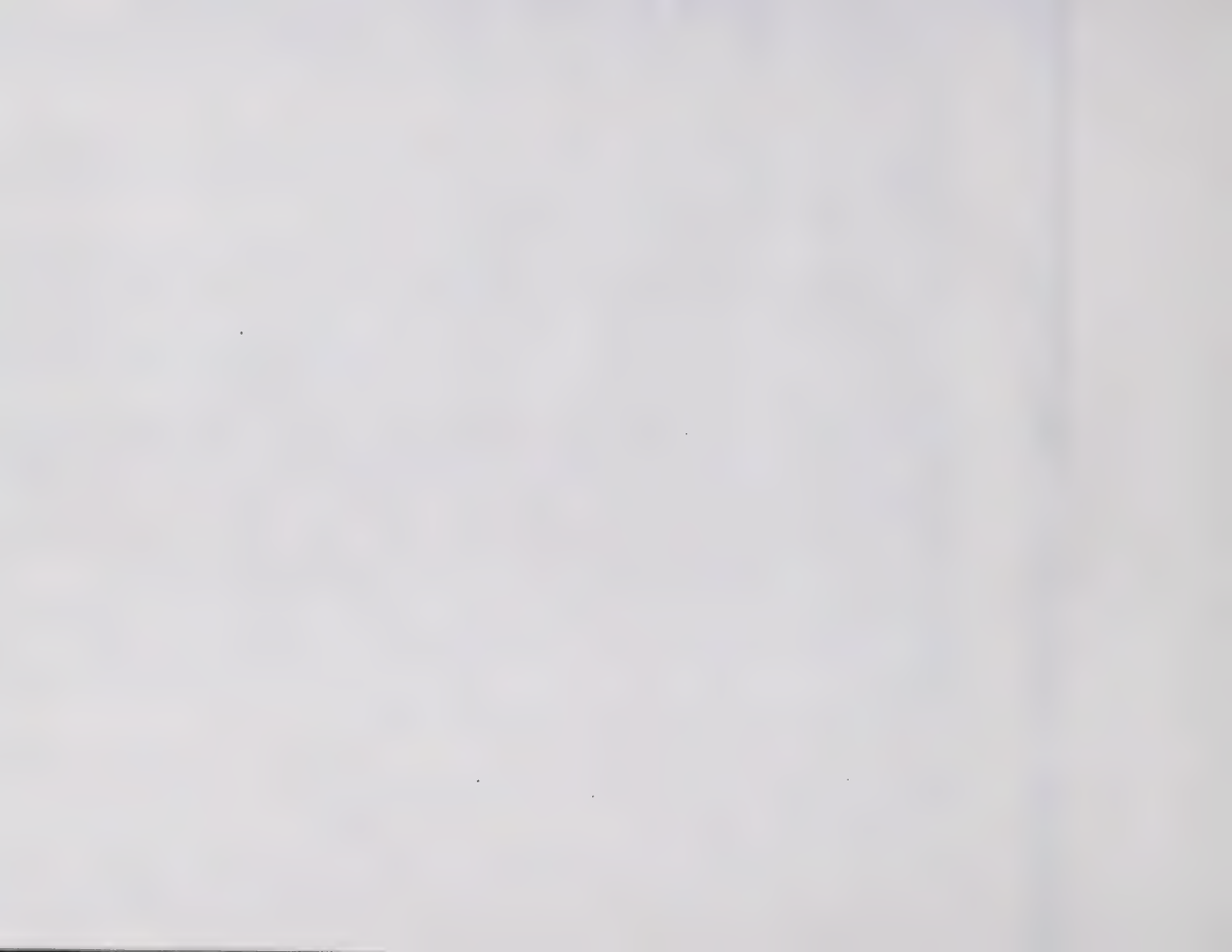
Amsterdam play house took fire; 7 persons were suffocated, and great numbers were wounded in getting out, A. D. 1772.

At the celebration of a wedding at Mantua, 36 Jews were killed by a floor giving way, among whom were the bride and the bridegroom's mother June 3. 1778.

Bourbon-les-bain, in Bassigni, France had the vault under the Church give way, during the celebration of mass, which occasioned the death of 600 persons, Sept. 15, 1778.

Montpellier in France, had a church wherein a play was performing, fell, and killed 300 persons, July 31 1783.

The floor of a meeting house of Methodists at Leeds, gave way, when 16 women, a man and a child were killed, and near 80 persons dreadfully wounded, May 20, 1798.



The theatre at Meotz, was destroyed by fire during the performance, on the falling of of which many were crushed to death and 70 were burnt. August, 1756.

Saragossa in Spain, had 400 of its inhabitants perished by a fire, that burnt down the play-house. December, 1773.

THE END.

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